

## **AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM 2020**

### **WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS (WRE) and WETLAND RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (WREP) RANKING POOL QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT AND RANKING TOOL (CART) FOR USE FY 2020**

These questions are utilized to rank and prioritize applications received for the above mentioned programs in Arkansas. These four categories comprise the Display Group utilized through Conservation Desktop and CART to calculate a programmatic and ecological score and is assigned to the specific application. The score is utilized to prioritize easement enrollment as a funding decision tool. Some of the questions are answered utilizing geospatial data and others are answered by the ranking official. The Applicability and Category questions do not have points assigned to them.

#### **APPLICABILITY QUESTION – Geospatial Question**

Is the easement intention located in the State of Arkansas?

#### **CATEGORY QUESTION – Text Question**

Is the easement intention located in the Tri-State WREP priority area, Battureland WREP priority area, or the TNC Cache River WREP area?

#### **PROGRAM PRIORITY QUESTIONS**

##### **Easement Duration – Text Question**

What is the length of the life of the easement requested on the application?

Permanent Easement      9 pts

30 Year Easement          0 pts

##### **Cost Effectiveness – Text Question**

What is the cost effectiveness of enrolling the land to maximize the environmental benefits?

High Cost                      0 pts

Low Cost                        2 pts

Clarifier: Cost Effectiveness is calculated and found on the Pre-Assessment Tool. High if benefit to cost ratio is < 0.2: Low if benefit to cost ratio is > 0.2. Cost to benefit ration is computed as environment benefit points divided by the acquisition and restoration cost per acre.

Is the landowner willing to participate in restoration cost reduction?

Yes	To What Extent?	25% - 20%	3.0 pts
		19% - 15%	2.5 pts
		14% - 10%	2.0 pts
		9% - 5%	1.5 pts
No			0.0 pts

Clarifier: Restoration Cost is found on the Pre-Assessment Tool.

### **RESOURCE PRIORITY QUESTIONS**

#### **Hydrology Restoration and Enhancement Potential – Text Question**

What is the level and potential of hydrology restoration on this site?

High	100 pts
Med	80 pts
Low	60 pts

Clarifier: Hydrology Restoration and Enhancement Potential is found on the Pre-Assessment Tool. Points are assigned based on the percentage of land that hydrology can be restored, created, or enhanced.

#### **Hydrology Restoration Diversity – Text Question**

How many different wetland types will exist after restoration?

1 type	0 pts
2 types	60 pts
3 types	80 pts
4 types	100 pts

Clarifier: Diversity types are

1. Managed shallow water or moist soil management areas
2. Intermittent unmanaged flooding
3. Permanent shallow water <3 ft.
4. Permanent deep water 3' or more
5. Saturated wetlands

### **Water Quality – Riparian Corridor – Text Question**

Does the proposed easement area contain a perennial or intermittent stream, or oxbow lake?

No – 0 pts

Yes- Continue

If the riparian area forms a continuous riparian corridor connected to wetlands, forest, or other areas of permanent vegetation adjacent to the easement boundary, will the part within the easement be:

One quarter mile or more in unbroken length – 40 pts

Less than one quarter mile in unbroken length – 30 pts

If the riparian area is not connected to an area of wetlands, forest, or other areas of permanent vegetation adjacent to the easement boundary, will the part within the easement be:

One quarter mile or more in unbroken length – 20 pts

Less than one quarter mile in unbroken length – 10 pts

Clarifier: Riparian Area is an area at least 100 feet wide, or to the easement boundary if less than 100 feet, that is or will be established to woody vegetation or allowed to under-go natural succession. This width will be measured laterally from the stream or lake, starting at the top of bank, on all sides that lie within the easement.

### **Water Quality – Floodwater Attenuation – Text Question**

How many acres of hydrology are expected to be created, restored, or enhanced that will trap sediment and extend the hydro-period for at least one month longer than current conditions?

More than 200 – 40 pts

150-200 – 30 pts

100 – 149 – 20 pts

50 – 99 – 15 pts

49 – 10 – 10 pts

<10 – 0 pts

Clarifier: To trap sediment, the site must receive surface runoff that contains sediment from adjacent lands or out of bank flow during flooded periods.

### **Location Significance – Proximity – Geospatial Question**

What is the proximity of the area to a permanently protected area?

Adjoins the defined area	- 30 pts
Within 1/4 mile of defined area	- 25 pts
From 1/4 to 1/2 mile of the defined area	- 20 pts
From 1/2 to 1 mile of the defined area	- 15 pts
From 1 mile to 2 miles of the defined area	- 10 pts
>2 miles from the defined area	- 0 pts

Clarifier: Permanently protected areas are: National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas, National Forest, WRP easements, ACEP -WRE easements, FSA easements, other areas owned by or under easement to federal agencies, state agencies, or conservation organizations? The protected area includes the proposed easement.

### **Location Significance – Size of Protected Lands – Text Question**

What is the acreage of the permanently protected defined area referenced in the previous question?

More than 20,000 acres	- 25 pts
20,000 - 10,000 acres	- 20 pts
10,000 - 5,000 acres	- 15 pts
5,000 - 1,000 acres	- 10 pts
< 1,000 acres	- 5 pts

Clarifier: Acres include the acreage in the application plus any acres of protected lands lying within two miles of the border of the application. If a portion of protected lands falls within the two-mile limit, continue to accumulate those acres until a break of 600 ft. occurs.

### **Wildlife Habitat - Declining, Threatened and Endangered Species - Contiguous Forest – Text Question**

The proposed easement area will become a part of an area of contiguous forest. How many acres of contiguous forest will exist that may or may not be under any type of easement or government control?

More than 5000	- 30 pts
3001-5000	- 25 pts
1001-3000	- 20 pts
500-1000	- 10 pts
Less than 500	- 5 pts

Clarifier: The area can be measured cumulatively from different adjacent locations. ACEP-WRE acres to be forested on this proposed site and any adjacent closed WRP/ACEP-WRE easement will be considered. Also, consider existing features and, to the extent possible, planned hydrology features. Moist soil units are considered open areas for purposes of determining fragmentation. Include natural oxbow lakes and any unmanaged water surfaces less than 600 feet wide as part of the contiguous area. Stop measuring in a direction when the measured width falls below 300 feet for a distance of 300 feet.

#### **Wildlife Habitat – Forest Bird Conservation Areas – Geospatial Question**

What is the location of the proposed easement in relation to areas included in the LMVJV Forest Breeding Bird Decision Model for Restoration, the Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Areas or the LMVJV Forest Wetland Restoration Focus Areas?

Any of the proposed Easement is within an area - 10 pts

None of the proposed Easement is within an area - 0 pts

#### **Wildlife Habitat – Declining, Threatened and Endangered Species**

Does the proposed easement abut an identified reach of a stream containing federally designated aquatic species? **Geospatial Question**

Yes – 2 pts

No – 0 pts

If the proposed easement is within an identified watershed or recharge zone containing federally designated aquatic species, how many species are identified? **Text Question**

3 species – 4 pts

2 species – 3 pts

1 species – 1 pt

Easement is not in an identified watershed – 0 pts

Is the proposed easement within the identified range of the federally endangered Indiana bat or pondberry or the proposed northern long-eared bat? **Geospatial Question**

Yes – 2 pts

No – 0 pts

#### **Operation and Maintenance – Geospatial Question**

Do all existing structural practices or structures planned for construction on the proposed easement lie outside of the Mississippi River Levee?

Yes – 3 pts

No – 0 pts